



**US Army Corps
of Engineers** ®
Kansas City District

News Release

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US Army Corps of Engineers encourages a safe and fun Fourth of July

KANSAS CITY, Mo - The Fourth of July is one of the busiest holiday weekends at America's rivers and lakes. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Kansas City District is encouraging recreation seekers to practice safety while enjoying the benefits of outdoor recreation.

Those who are able to get to their favorite spots are reminded that the current flooding situation is producing hazards at the lakes, dangers that can get people in trouble. If you are a boater, be aware that there are floating or submerged debris and dangerous currents in previously calm waters at some lakes. Water levels are much higher so the usual landmarks are not visible. Be especially alert to changing weather, supervise children and wear life jackets.

Here are some safety tips:

"Fireworks"! Fireworks are prohibited at Corps of Engineer lakes except for organized firework displays.

Boaters! Before Getting Underway: -- Know your boat and know the rules of the road. Take a safe boating course. -- Check your boat for all required safety equipment. Visit <http://www.cgaux.org> for information on free Vessel Safety Checks. -- Consider the size of your boat, the number of passengers and the amount of extra equipment that will be on-board. DON'T OVERLOAD THE BOAT! -- Follow manufacturer's suggested procedures BEFORE starting up the engine. -- Wear your life jacket -- don't just carry one on board. -- Leave your alcohol behind. Increase your safety, not your risks! -- Check the weather forecast. -- File a float plan with a member of your family or friend. -- View the Coast Guard Federal Regulations governing boating at: <http://www.uscgboating.org/regulations/regulations.htm> and know your state laws as well.

Swimmers! Since most people drown within 10-30 feet of safety, it is important that you and your family LEARN TO SWIM. Please remember: -- Wear a life jacket at all times when near the water. -- Never rely on toys such as inner tubes and water wings to stay afloat. -- Don't take chances, by over estimating your swimming skills. -- Swim only in designated swimming areas. - - Never swim alone. -- Reach or throw, but don't go in the water to help someone in trouble.

Wading! Seems harmless, but is often fatal if you can't swim. If you are outside an approved swimming area, the bottom of the lake is very irregular. There are holes, ledges and ditches that can make that 'next step' the one that puts you in water over your head. If you are not a good swimmer or wearing a life jacket, you will be in trouble real fast. Many people drown each year when they were only out to do a little wading. Often these people are not good swimmers and do not realize the danger that lies just under the water.

Drowning Fatalities: Each year, approximately 6,000 people drown in the United States. Drowning is the SECOND leading cause of accidental deaths for persons 15-44 years of age. What is really surprising is that two-thirds of the people who drown never had an intention of being in the water!

Diving! Never dive into lakes and rivers...the results can be tragic. Every year, diving accidents result in more than 8,000 people suffering paralyzing spinal cord injuries and another 5,000 dying before they reach the hospital. All too often, hidden dangers lurk beneath the surface of the water, including rock outcrops or shallow water.

Watch Small Children! Each year about 200 children drown and several thousand others are treated in hospitals for submersion accidents, accidents which leave children with permanent brain damage and respiratory health problems. Remember, it only takes a few seconds for a small child to wander away and as little as 8 seconds for a child to drown. Children have a natural curiosity and attraction to water. Watch your children at all times when around the water.

Alcohol -- The Fun Killer! It's a fact; alcohol and water do not mix! Unfortunately, many people ignore this and each year about 3,000 of them are wrong...dead wrong! More than half of all drowning fatalities involve alcohol. Being intoxicated is not necessary for alcohol to be a threat to your safety. Just one beer will impair your balance, vision, judgment and reaction time, thus making you a potential danger to yourself and others. Research shows that four hours of boating, exposure to noise, vibration, sun, glare and wind produces fatigue that makes you act as if you were legally intoxicated. If you combine alcohol consumption with this boating fatigue condition, it intensifies the effects and increases your accident risk. So remember, if you plan to have fun in, on, or near the water, don't drink alcohol.

The Corps is our nation's largest federal provider of outdoor recreation, operating more than 2,500 recreation areas at 456 projects (mostly lakes) and leasing an additional 1,800 sites to state or Local Park and recreation authorities or private interests. The Corps hosts about 375 million visits each year at its lakes, beaches and other areas, and estimates that 25 million Americans (one in ten) visit a Corps project at least once a year to recreate. Additional information about the Corps recreation program is available at www.corpslakes.us. Information about camping or group shelter reservations and other recreation opportunities on Federal lands and waters is available at www.recreation.gov.

The Corps offers this final thought: Please make your visit to any recreation area a safe and enjoyable one. And remember, water safety saves lives.